



Photos by Capt. Malcolm Kemeny and Capt. Jeff Wood



**Left, Aggressors from the 414th Combat Training Squadron, are refueled by a Salt Lake City Air National Guard KC-135 Tanker during their return flight to Nellis. Above, Maj. Jeff Weathers, 414th CTS, plans a mission during Maple Flag. The exercise is designed to test the capabilities of aircraft, pilots and ground crew in a real world combat scenarios while forward deployed. Above right, MiG-29s from the 731st Squadron, Laage Air Base, Germany, sit ready on the ramp for launch at Cold Lake Air Base, Canada. The MiGs were used as enemy forces during the deployment and offer a unique training environment for pilots.**



**Airman Nicole Ferrel, Life Support technician with the 414th Combat Training Squadron, checks out flight gear following a sortie. All the equipment from helmets to engines are thoroughly inspected after each flight.**

# *Nellis Aggressors return home from Maple Flag XXXIII*

**By Capt. Veronica Kemeny  
AWFC Public Affairs**

The superior dog fighting skills of Nellis' own cadre of villains recently heated up the cold skies over Canada.

The 414th Combat Training Squadron, the Aggressor pilots, maintenance team and their six jets returned home June 24 after spending six weeks in Cold Lake, Canada participating in Maple Flag XXXIII.

The Canadian exercise provides units from Canada, the United States and other allied nations such as Germany, the ability to practice and train with each other to improve joint allied operations in the event they are called upon during a real-world conflict.

"The goal of the exercise is to increase the combat capabilities of the allied air forces," said Maj. Jeff "Stormy" Weathers, 414th CTS Aggressor pilot. "Similar to Red Flag, we try to give the youngest aircrew members 10 sorties in a simulated

combat environment that is as close to real combat as we can make it." Every party involved benefits from the training up north.

"Units at Maple Flag have learned to integrate diverse aircraft from different nations in a large force exercise," said Maj. Weathers. "This training also allows allied air forces an opportunity to fly in a different environment from the desert climate of Nevada. It augments Red Flag."

Nellis maintenance troops also received valuable training during the deployment.

"Maple Flag was an excellent opportunity for our people to gain valuable insight and experience while working with combat air forces from other units and several foreign nations," said 1st Lt. Dave Goode, assistant maintenance commander for deployed Viper maintenance. "More than 100 aircraft, maintainers and backshop personnel deployed to Cold Lake, most of whom were junior members with limited experience," he said.

"However, their hard work combined with the support provided from the Maple Flag staff, ensured we contributed to the overall success of the mission."

Training provided by the exercise is extremely realistic.

"This was the first year the MiG-29 Fulcrums (from Germany) took part in Maple Flag," said Maj. Weathers. "They were part of the Red Force. This was the first time most of the allied aircrew got to fly against a MiG-29 threat."

The training was excellent said Lt. Col. Craig "Mole" Underhill, 414th CTS operations officer.

"Flying with our NATO partners and learning how they employ their weapons systems is beneficial for everyone involved," said Col. Underhill. "The Canadians were great hosts. The town and Maple Flag staff were extremely friendly and helpful."

The Aggressors will be gearing up for Green Flag which begins here at the end of July and runs through September.



**In the cockpit, Lt. Col. Craig Underhill, 414th Combat Training Squadron's operations officer, taxis as Airman 1st Class Kendall Herzer, 57th Aircraft Generation Squadron marshals the F-16D Aggressor for take-off.**